

## What We've Been Through by pralinepumpkinseeds

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**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler

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**Summary:**

The team works on rebuilding the inside of the Byers' house. When Nancy starts to think about Barbara and the monster, Jonathan helps calm her down.

## What We've Been Through

### Author's Note:

I really really love their relationship, and wanted to write a scene where they continue to get closer.

It takes all of them—Joyce, Hopper, Nancy, Jonathan, the boys, and occasionally Steve (trying to prove to Nancy that he's a good guy)—to repair the Byers' home. Will is still too weak to help, so the first room they fix is his, doing their best to make it the same for him when he returns. Nancy is the first to offer her help, since, "I'm the reason your hallway was on fire, anyway," and also convinces her brother and his friends to help out, giving them a distraction from grieving for Eleven. Mike still won't talk to her about Eleven, saying he needs more time, and will only say "she really liked Eggos".

The first thing they do is take down the lights, but they save them in a box to put back up after they're done, since it's almost December, and the lights comfort Joyce. While Joyce strips the wallpaper from the living room, Nancy helps Jonathan pull the carpet out of the hallway. They try to move the bear trap first, but the blood and flesh from the monster has bound it to the carpet, and they have to roll it up in the carpet. The smell is so bad that Jonathan has to grab two towels out of a closet to tie around their mouths and noses.

"I still can't believe all of this really happened," Nancy muses as she peels the floorboard back. "I stopped believing in magic years ago, I never thought..."

"Well it wasn't really magic, right? It was like... paranormal science, I guess."

Nancy smiles behind the towel. "Yeah, I guess if it'd been magic it would've been nicer."

"Still really messed up though. I really thought... I really thought Will was—"

"Jonathan. Don't think about that. You and your mom have him back

now, and he's gonna be fine."

"I just wish I'd believed her earlier, you know?"

Nancy turns from her work on the floorboards to look at him. He's kneeling on the floor, surrounded by tufts of carpet and nails. His hair is pushed to the side with sweat from working, only his eyes visible on his face, pleading and sad.

Nancy sighs and pushes her sleeves up more. "I barely believed it when I saw it myself. And hey, it all worked out." She reaches across the hallway to pat his arm a couple times. "Just try not to think about it. You've got your brother again, focus on that. That's what I'm doing."

What she doesn't say is that she still sees that thing every time she closes her eyes, imagines what Barb had seen as she was dying, the pain she must've felt, how scared she would have been, how she must've screamed and begged for help when Nancy had been so close, wondering why she wasn't coming...

"Nancy?" A hand is on her shoulder, warm but light. "Nancy, are you okay?"

She pulls herself out of the grey place of her thoughts and tries to smile. "Yeah, I'm- I'm fine," She looks up at Jonathan, kneeling next to her, and tries not to cry when she sees the worry in his eyes.

"Are you sure? You... kinda blanked out."

"Just thinking," She says. Her eyes fall to the pile of carpet a few feet away from them, the black goo oozing out the sides. Suddenly the music coming from Will's room is too loud, and she feels like she's being pressed into a tiny box, the walls swaying around her. She chokes on the air around her and scrambles up, clutching the wall for support.

"I- I need air," She manages, moving quickly to the back door.

She hears Jonathan getting up behind her but doesn't stop until she's standing outside, ripping the towel from her face and running her shaking fingers through her hair. *Oh god, oh god, Barbara, she's gone*

*she's really gone, I could've, she was so close and I didn't help her, too busy making out with Steve... god dammit I never should've- the monster turns away from its prey, sees her and screams, running toward her--*

The door bangs behind her but she doesn't look up, staring at one spot on the ground, trying to keep the world from spinning around her. *Deep breaths, Nancy!* She breathes in through her nose, out through her mouth, trying to keep it controlled, but she's a shaky mess, and it just turns into gulping.

"Nancy." Jonathan's standing next to her, close but not touching her, wary and not wanting to overstep his boundaries. He's holding the towel in his hands, twisting it.

"She was right there. She was right there Jonathan and she probably yelled for me, I thought I heard something but I couldn't tell I was too busy... fuck! I just keep thinking about it, I just keep," She's rambling now, tears on her face and hands fluttering about her face and hair. "I keep seeing the monster in the woods, what Nancy must've seen... that *thing* was the last thing she ever saw. It killed her. It killed her, Jonathan. She's dead... Barb's dead, oh god,"

"Nancy, I think you need to sit down, please, sit down." Jonathan tugs at her sleeve and she collapses against him, dry sobbing, all her tears spent on the days before. He sits them down on the ground, Nancy clinging to him, her face buried in his shirt.

"Barb's dead and I can't even tell her mom because her body isn't here, it isn't here and they all think she ran away. They'll just think I'm crazy but she's dead and it killed her."

Jonathan wraps his arms tighter around her and rubs a circle in her shoulder as she cries, eventually running out of steam and growing slack against him.

"It's my fault she's d-dead." She whispers into his shirt.

"What?" He pulls back to look at her face. "Nancy... it's not your fault there's nothing you could have done. I was there too, I was *outside* with her, and I didn't even see it. I didn't hear anything either. It's not your fault."

“Don’t you get it? I’m the reason she was there. I wanted to go to Steve’s stupid party, and she went to make sure I didn’t do anything stupid, and I did anyways, and now she’s dead!” She looks him in the eyes, her bottom lip trembling. “You were right. I thought I was rebelling, doing the same thing as everyone else, because I was bored, and then my *best friend died because I wanted to go to some bullshit party.*”

Something flickers behind Jonathan’s eyes and he frowns. “Nancy, I was harsh in the woods. I was just... you’re not gonna end up like your mom. Barbara’s not dead because you wanted to go to that party.”

Nancy shakes her head and balls her fist in his shirt.

“She’s... She’s dead because of the monster. What happened happened and there’s nothing we can do to change it. Punishing yourself now won’t bring her back.”

“I know,” Nancy chokes out, on the verge of crying again. “I know,” She leans back into his chest and closes her eyes, fighting to slow her breathing.

Jonathan’s heart is breaking for her, but all she can feel is his warmth, his hands on her neck and back.

“I’m sorry I got mine back from the monster and you didn’t,” He whispers into her hair.

“No,” She says, nearly a growl. “Never say that, you hear me? I’m so happy that Will is back. Don’t fucking apologize for having your brother back.” Her voice is stern, and she wipes her eyes before hitting him once on the chest. “Don’t. Never apologize for Will being alive.”

“Okay,” he says, voice soft. “I won’t.”

Nancy glares at him. “Promise?”

“I promise.”

She squeezes his hand that’s resting on her waist. “Good.”

They stay like that for a minute before her breathing is completely under control, and her head is no longer throbbing and sending the world around her into the gray Upside Down.

“I guess we’d better go finish that hallway.” She starts to get up.

He smiles at her, the small smile that she can’t help but return, the one that makes her heart stop in her throat. She reaches down to him and pulls him up, giving his hand another squeeze before putting the towel back over her face.

“A dirty hallway’s nothing compared to what we’ve been through.”